

Dr. Irvin D. Leoser's Log Cabin
119 W. Smith
Tahlequah
Cherokee County
Oklahoma

HABS No. OK-27

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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

DR. IRVIN D. LEOSER'S LOG CABIN

Location: 119 W. Smith, Tahlequah, Cherokee County,
Oklahoma.

USGS Tahlequah Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 15/322600/3976520

Present Owner: Miss Sue Crafton, 121 W. Smith, Tahlequah,
Oklahoma.

Present Occupant: Mr. Clem Evans.

Significance: The cabin of Dr. Irvin D. Leoser is the oldest
building in Tahlequah, and one of the two or
three oldest buildings in the State of Oklahoma.
During and after the Civil War the cabin, which was
considerably larger at that time, was an
important place of refuge for persons who had
been displaced by the incessant clash of Union
and Confederate detachments in the area. Its
first known owner, Dr. Leoser, was one of the few
doctors in the Indian Territory, and at times was
the only doctor in Tahlequah.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: Estimates vary between 1833 and 1848.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Prior to or soon after arriving
in Cherokee Nation, Dr. Leoser married a Cherokee, entitling him
to Cherokee citizenship, and the right to occupy land. Title to
land was in general held by the Nation. The platting of the
town, however, called for payment for the occupation of town
lots. The patent in the chain of title which follows is the only
patent found to date in this project which mentions an exchange of
currency. There are no records of the property dating before
allotments in severalty (which began in 1904), as was usual for
property in the Cherokee Nation. Reference for the following is
to the Office of the Clerk of Cherokee County, Cherokee County
Courthouse, Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

Patent
Cherokee Nation
to
Callie Leoser \$72.50
1 September 1906
Recorded 8 October 1945
Book 104 page 540
(Callie was the daughter of Dr. Leoser)

Warranty Deed
Callie Leoser
to
Susan Crafton for one dollar and love and affection
9 July 1948
Recorded 10 July 1948
Book 188 page 155
(Miss Crafton is the niece of Callie Leoser)

5. Original plans and construction: Logs from the nearby forests were used in the construction of the cabin. The cabin was originally square in plan.
 6. Alterations and additions: The two-room cabin which stands today is approximately twice the size of the original structure. The north room is presumed to have been the entire cabin as it first stood. Comparison of this portion with turn-of-the-century photographs reveals most of the logs to be of considerable age, a fact which is belied by their excellent condition. The house was probably at its largest by the Civil War, having been expanded from the original one room by the addition of two rooms to the south end, which were then connected by a breezeway (sometimes used as a dining room) to a kitchen at the far south end. These were arranged in a row, shotgun style. At the east side a large bedroom and porch were added. The dates at which these additions were removed are unknown; the present south room was added in 1907, probably after the above removal, the first south addition. Porches across the front were probably installed with the additions. The present rough-hewn log supports of the porch appear as square milled posts in the old photographs. Present window openings seem to correspond to the original openings, but little is known of the changes in sash type.
- B. Historical Context: Dr. Irvin D. Leoser, whose surname was variously spelled as Lozier, Loesur, Leosur and Loser, was probably born in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania, where he grew up. Later he became a doctor, and then an army surgeon. He made his way to New York, and then to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where he was to be shipped to Mexico to serve in the Mexican War. By the time he reached Fort Smith, about 1849, he discovered that there was no more war, and decided to remain

approximately where he was. Having heard of Tahlequah in the Cherokee Nation, he sought it out and stayed there to live, being at that time virtually the only physician in the area. He acquired the cabin which bears his name in 1852. There is no indication that he acquired it from anyone in particular.

As a physician to most of the town and the seminaries, Dr. Leoser made house calls by horseback. He is most remembered for sheltering families which had been displaced by the Civil War, and had fled to Texas, upon their return from that state. He is also thought to have been instrumental in the platting of the town, which was decreed by the National Council on October 28, 1843. The most substantial corroboration of this statement is the fact that the original town plat makes a curious jog to the northeast to cover the area of his cabin, which was most probably the only dwelling in the area at that time, the bulk of Tahlequah residents living southeast of there. Dr. Leoser died in Tahlequah in 1876. A large frame house was built just north of the cabin and has been the residence of Leoser's descendants. The cabin is still in the hands of the family.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:.

1. Architectural character: The Leoser log cabin is one of the earliest examples of frontier log construction remaining in eastern Oklahoma.
2. Condition of fabric: Good; interior considerably altered.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The one-story cabin measures 18'-3" (two-bay front) x 15'-8". In plan the cabin is rectangular, having been extended to the right (northeast) by a one-story shed wing.
2. Foundations: The cabin rests on a low foundation of uncoursed fieldstone which is well-mortared with Portland cement grout.
3. Walls: The walls are of 12-inch square hewn oak logs notched at their ends with flush joints. The interstices have been filled with cement chinking. All wall surfaces are painted brown, although much of the paint has weathered away. The walls of the shed addition on the right are covered with gray composition siding.
4. Structural system, framing: The logs, laid on top of each other, provide the bearing walls for the cabin proper. The shed wing is of frame construction, and has sawn studs in its walls and

sawn joists in its shed roof. The log joists of the simple gable roof, laid parallel to the principal facade, are evident under the eaves in the two-side gables of the log cabin.

5. Porches: A wooden front porch has been built across both the front of the cabin and its wing. Its floor, framed over an uncoursed fieldstone foundation, is of 3 1/4-inch tongue-and-groove boards. It has six columns, all of logs but one; the last on the right having been replaced by a 2" x 4". The shed roof joins the log cabin just under the front eaves of the latter.
6. Chimneys: There is a small chimney on the exterior of right side of the cabin, rising from within the shed addition, and it is of brick. It once served a stove.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The two exterior doors, one leading to the log cabin and the other to its addition, are both on the front (southeast) facade, and are framed in plain boards painted white. The door to the cabin is a wooden four-panel door, and that to the addition is a bead-and-cove five crosspanel door; both are painted white.
 - b. Windows and shutters: There are no shutters. There are three windows (two on the rear and one on the northeast side), and all are unpainted. They all have wooden double-hung sash with six-over-six lights.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: A simple gable roof covers the cabin with a shed roof covering the wing and the porch; all are in green asphalt shingles.
 - b. Eaves: The eaves have boarded ceilings beneath the overhangs at each gable end.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The front entrance to the cabin is in the left bay of the front (southeast) facade, leading to a single room which is used as both a living room and a bedroom. To the right of this room is another doorway which leads to the shed addition. Another door in the right bay of the cabin provides access to the addition. There is no access to the loft area, nor is there a basement.

2. Flooring: The flooring of the cabin is varnished 3 1/8-inch tongue-and-groove boarding. That of the addition is unfinished 3 1/4-inch tongue-and-groove boarding.
 3. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceiling have been papered, probably several times, in both rooms of the house.
 4. Doorways and doors: The single, plainly enframed door between the two rooms is a four-panel door, identical to the front door of the cabin, painted white.
 5. Hardware: The decorative hinges of the front door and stamped metal box locks are possibly original to the installation of the doors.
 6. Mechanical equipment: There are no modern heating or plumbing facilities in the house. Artificial lighting is by means of a single incandescent bulb in each room, suspended on its wire from the ceiling.
- D. Site: The cabin faces southeast, by the side of a gravel drive which leads to the Colonial cottage which replaced it. Behind the cabin, and in front of the house is an old stone well, now capped, from which water was drawn, and several other smaller buildings are arranged in the yard by the present owner, who is interested in antiques. The neighborhood is presently suburban, where once the cabin stood alone on its farm.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

One photograph in the possession of the current owner of the cabin, Miss Sue Crafton, shows the building from the northwest corner as it was about 1900.

B. Interviews:

Interview with Miss Sue Crafton, aged approximately 80 years, granddaughter of Dr. Leoser, July 8, 1975.

Interviews with early citizens of Tahlequah on Pioneer-Indian history, on file at the Oklahoma Historical Society, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

Interview with Mr. Walter Leoser, Tahlequah, February 22, 1938, pp. 251-254.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Tulsa, Oklahoma. Foreman Collection of the Gilcrease Institute. "History of Tahlequah" [by Carolyn Thomas Foreman].

2. Secondary and published sources:

Herrington, Beth. Historic Homes of Tahlequah. Tahlequah, Oklahoma: East Central Baptist Press. (copies available at the libraries of the Cherokee National Historical Society and Northeastern Oklahoma State University).

"An Act to Lay Off Tahlequah Council Ground into Town Lots and to Dispose of Same," as referred to in "An Act Incorporating the Town of Tahlequah." Published laws, October 30, 1852.

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Summer 1975

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Oklahoma Historical Society and the Cherokee National Historical Society. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1975, at the HABS Field Office on the campus of Northeastern Oklahoma State University, Tahlequah, Oklahoma, by Michael A. Tomlan (Cornell University), Project Supervisor; John D. Hnedak (Cornell University), Project Historian; Bethanie C. Grashof (University of Florida), Vicki J. Higgins (University of Cincinnati), Nicholas H. Holmes III (Auburn University) and Roger D. Swayze (University of Oregon), student assistant architects. The written descriptive data was edited for permanent HABS collection at the Library of Congress by Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, in the winter of 1981. Walter Smalling, Jr. of Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior took the documentary photos of the building in October of 1979.